(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken to provide free and compulsory education to children?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) The steps initiated by the Government to fulfil the promises made in the National Common Minimum Programme including the following:—

1. 2% cess on Central taxes was introduced to fund education in the year 2004-05. An additional 1% cess exclusively earmarked to finance Higher and Secondary education has been introduced from the year 2007-08. With these steps public spending on Education has increased from 3.49% in the year 2003-04 to 3.66% (provisional) in the year 2005-06.

2. An action plan has been prepared for implementing the recommendations of a CABE Committee on measures to enhance the autonomy of higher education institutions and to institutionalize regulatory provisions for promoting autonomy and accountability of higher educational institutions. Powers to enter into MoUs with foreign universities have been restored to all Universities. Government has reintroduced the Block Grants scheme to IITs and IIMs to restore their financial autonomy. It has also been decided that participation in the All India Engineering Entrance Examination would not be mandatory for all institutions. Government has further established transparency and autonomy in the processes of selection of senior faculty in institutions such as the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, Indian Institute of Historical Research and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

3. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 has been revised to subscribe to the principles of secularism, democracy and equality stated in the Constitution and in the National Policy on Education.

4. A Mid-Day Meal Programme was introduced in schools in 2004-05, benefiting 12 crore children studying in classes I-V in Govt., Govt. aided and local body schools, as well as centres run under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)/ Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) scheme in all States/UTs. From 2007-08 the scheme will be extended to cover children in upper primary (classes V to VIII) in educationally backward blocks in the country.

(b) to (d) Universal Elementary Education has not yet been fully achieved; however, the Government implements a number of schemes mainly Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Programme in association with the State/UT Governments to provide free education to children in the 6 to 14 years age group and ensure their universal retention. 3.68 crore children have joined schools since the launch of SSA in 2001 and the number of out-of-school children has reduced from about 3.20 crores in the year 2001-02 to about 70 lakhs in the year 2006-07.

Expenditure on education

94. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) what is the percentage of GDP towards higher education, primary and middle education during the last three years;

(b) how it compares with the developed countries; and

(c) whether Government plan to increase this in the coming years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) The percentage of GDP towards Higher Education and Elementary Education (consisting of primary and middle education) is given below:—

Year	Higher Education	Elemenary Education
2004-05	0.44%	1.48%
2005-06	0.45%	1.57%
2006-07	0.44%	1.61%

(b) The percentage of GDP towards higher, primary and middle education separately is not available for other countries. However public expenditure on Education for all sectors as percentage of GDP is 3.39% in India during 2004-05 as compared to 5.7% in USA, 5.3% in U.K., 5.6% in France and 4.8% in Germany during the same period.

(c) The Common Minimum Programme of the Government pledges to increase the public spending in education to at least 6% of GDP in a phased manner with at least half of the amount being spent on primary and secondary education sectors. The XI Plan Approach Paper approved by NDC also says that the XI Plan should ensure that we move towards raising public spending in education to 6% of GDP.

High illiteracy rate States

95. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether eight States alone account for nearly 70 per cent of the country's illiterates, which means that out of 304 million illiterate people in the country, 212.19 million come from these eight States alone;

(b) whether, according to the recently released reports on the status of adult literacy in the country, 13 States need to pay special attention for raising their literacy levels;

(c) if so, whether this report was brought out by the National Literacy Mission; and

(d) if so, what concrete steps and measures Government propose to take, to help and assist these States to improve the position?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (c) A publication titled "Status of Adult Literacy in India" by Shri Prem Chand based on 2001 census data has been brought out by the Directorate of Adult Education, New Delhi. Nearly 70% of the illiterate populations in the country are in the 8 states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. Further, 13 States namely Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar have literacy rate below the national average of 64.8%.